

Washington, DC (July 11, 2012) – The House Veterans Affairs Committee on Wednesday passed legislation introduced by Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Palm Harbor), Vice Chairman of the Committee, that would improve outreach and transparency to veterans and members of the Armed Forces to help them make informed decisions about the institutions of higher learning where they can use their GI Benefits and develop their skills after serving our nation.

"Service members looking to use their hard-earned GI benefits deserve to be armed with the best and most complete information to help them decide what institutions will best meet their needs," Bilirakis said. "Veterans returning to the civilian workforce are struggling to find meaningful work, and this legislation is a way in which we can help them receive the most affordable and effective education to advance in their future career."

During Wednesday's markup, the committee also passed an amendment introduced by Bilirakis ensuring that veterans receive proper burials. It will require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide caskets or urns for veterans with no next of kin and insufficient resources to cover burial and funeral expenses.

The legislation comes after it was discovered that Pvt. Lawrence Davis Jr., a World War II veteran with no next of kin, was buried in a cardboard box at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Fla.

"This legislation recognizes the service of our heroes and ensures that veterans who do not have immediate family are not forgotten and receive proper respect upon their passing," Bilirakis said.